

# spruce-up of landmark Bug Light going well

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DUXBURY — Friends of Bug Light are well along in their top-to-bottom refurbishing of the 112-year-old landmark lighthouse.

The spruce-up is the result of a combined effort of the U.S. Coast Guard, public officials, private contributors, and a dozen volunteers from Plymouth, Kingston and Duxbury.

"It means so much to sailors and mariners. Bug Light is a friend to people in navigation," Earl McMahon said. He is chairman of the three-town committee that has helped saved the landmark from the wrecker's ball.

The Coast Guard had planned to lop off the top half and replace it with a sleek fiberglass tower. But public outcry scratched that design and led to a cooperative effort to restore the old, rusty light.

The tower has an automatic light signal and a foghorn that is activated by the Gurnet Lighthouse keeper across the bay. McMahon said both the sight and sound of the light have

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comforted many a fog-enshrouded captain, including his daughter.

Last October the Coast Guard cutter *Bittersweet* anchored nearby and crews sandblasted ¼-inch of rust accumulated on the 2-inch metal plates on the base of the light. It was then painted a bright marine-red up to the waterline, including the gossamer plates supporting the walkway, McMahon said.

They also covered the base with black tar to prevent further rusting. Since then, the dozen members of McMahon's volunteer brigade—which includes a welder, a carpenter and an engineer — have replaced about 75 percent of the wooden

walkway with new pressure-treated planking.

The walkway work is expected to be done by the end of this week. The next step will be to sandblast the middle exterior section of the light, rust-treat it, and paint it with two coats of epoxy, marine-red paint, McMahon said.

So far the Bug Light committee has raised about \$8,000 of its \$20,000 goal from contributions and by various fund-raising activities like a fashion show, baseball games, T-shirt and dining guide sales, and a painting raffle. Entering a float with a replica of the light on top in the Plymouth July 4 parade netted the

committee a \$200 first place prize, he said.

This past weekend the committee set up an exhibit at the Plymouth waterfront near the visiting *Spirit of Massachusetts* tall ship. "There were crowds of people and we received many generous donations from visitors," McMahon said. "I think we raised over \$700 from the sale of T-shirts since Friday."

The committee has a five-year maintenance agreement with the Coast Guard. With periodic inspections of the windows, brick, steel, roof, wood and foundation, the committee will determine which items it will upgrade each year, he said.

In 112 years, only ½-inch of the 2-inch-thick cast iron base has corroded. "The engineers did a heck of a good job in designing and fabricating that lighthouse," McMahon said. "By taking care of it now, it will last another 100 to 200 years."

He said contributions to the restoration project are tax-deductible. They may be made to the Plymouth Five Cents Savings Bank, or, in Duxbury, to the Rockland Trust and Plymouth Savings banks.